

# News Release

# Senator Pete V. Domenici

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## DOMENICI CONTINUES PROMOTING N.M. DIRECTED ENERGY CENTER

### Senator Tours SVS Inc., Notes \$5.7 Million More for WSMR-THEL Testing

ALBUQUERQUE -- U.S. Senator Pete Domenici today predicted that Congress will soon direct more attention and funding toward directed energy research and testing, a move that should benefit both Defense Department and private-sector work in New Mexico.

Domenici today toured SVS Inc., an Albuquerque-based firm considered at the forefront of laser technology. Founded in 1993, SVS specializes in electro-optical systems and image processing solutions for aerospace, defense and commercial customers. The company provides precision acquisition, tracking, pointing and imaging products, and system engineering on major Department of Defense directed-energy programs including the Airborne Laser based at Kirtland Air Force Base, space based laser and Tactical High Energy Laser (THEL).

Related to THEL, Domenici also called attention to the \$5.7 million in supplemental appropriations he secured to ensure that this Army program has sufficient funding to continue testing at White Sands Missile Range this year. The funding is pending a presidential signature as part of an \$11.2 billion emergency supplemental appropriations package included in the FY2001 Military Construction Appropriations Bill.

"In the last few years on Capitol Hill, there has been increasing momentum surrounding the Defense Department's activities in directed energy technologies. We are gaining a greater understanding of the possibilities and problems in this field. While these technologies have matured sufficiently to offer solutions to some of the most daunting defense challenges, the science and technology funding is inadequate to realize these aims," Domenici said. "But I firmly believe this will change in the near future."

Domenici reported that his Directed Energy Coordination and Consolidation Act is currently pending as an amendment to the Defense Authorization Bill which the Senate is expected to finalize next week. The amendment would start enactment of aspects of the Defense Department's High Energy Laser Master Plan for improving management and coordination of these programs. In addition, the Senate approved a Domenici-authored amendment to the FY2001 Defense Appropriations Bill that allocates an additional \$50 million for defense-wide science and technology spending on laser research.

"While enactment of my directed energy provisions should serve to enhance and accelerate some of the research, development, test and evaluation activities here in Albuquerque and New Mexico, I firmly believe taking this action is also in our national interest," Domenici said, while also noting that companies like SVS Inc. are also pushing this technology forward.

"American dominance relies heavily on our technological superiority. Companies like SVS and Boeing understand this. Both have been at the forefront of efforts in laser programs," he said. "I also appreciate SVS' role as a corporate citizen in Albuquerque and its active leadership to focus attention on directed energy and on the problems with science and technology funding in the Defense Department."

Boeing, which has launched negotiations to acquire SVS, is the lead on the airborne laser program and part of the corporate team working on the space based laser. SVS serves as the foremost subcontractor for laser pointing and tracking technologies.

When the Boeing-SVS announcement was made last week, Mike Skolnick, vice president and general manager of the Laser and Electro Optical Systems unit of Boeing, touted New Mexico as “quickly becoming the center of excellence for developing the technologies needed to field the next generation of laser and electro-optical systems... We intend to build on the significant commitment that SVS has already made to technical excellence and the New Mexico community.”

Domenici agreed New Mexico is well-suited to be designated as the center for the nation’s directed energy efforts, which includes test and evaluation activities being conducted at WSMR.

The \$5.7 million gained by Domenici in May for THEL survived conference negotiations last week, and now only needs President Clinton’s signature to become law. THEL is funded through a cost-share arrangement between Israel and the United States, with the TRW Corp. having also invested a considerable amount in the program.

“THEL represents one of the first weapons systems utilizing lasers for the purpose of missile defense. High energy laser technologies have the potential to bring a revolutionary shift in U.S. defense capabilities within the next decade,” Domenici said. “This funding means there will be no shortfall this year or forced stop work order.”

The U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command (SMDC), TRW, and test support personnel at WSMR have worked to coordinate the full array of planned tests for THEL. Based upon a government cost-to-completion estimate, an additional \$19.9 million is required to successfully complete THEL testing for this fiscal year. Under the cost share arrangements between the United States, Israel, and TRW, an additional U.S. share of \$5.7 million is required. The Israel share is \$5 million, and TRW’s share is \$9.2 million.

Related to THEL funding for next year, Domenici has gained \$15 million in the FY2001 Defense Appropriations Bill for the program. The funding is a rebuff to the administration’s budget request that sought no funding for the program.